

LEOPOLD ZUNZ¹

We are assembled for the solemn duty of paying a tribute to the memory of him whose name graces our lodge. A twofold interest attaches us to Leopold Zunz, appealing, as he does, to our local pride, and, beyond and above that, to our Jewish feelings. Leopold Zunz was part of the Berlin of the past, every trace of which is vanishing with startling rapidity. Men, houses, streets are disappearing, and soon naught but a memory will remain of old Berlin, not, to be sure, a City Beautiful, yet filled for him that knew it with charming associations. A precious remnant of this dear old Berlin was buried forever, when, on one misty day of the spring of 1886, we consigned to their last resting place the mortal remains of Leopold Zunz. Memorial addresses are apt to abound in such expressions as "immortal," "imperishable," and in flowery tributes. This one shall not indulge in them, although to no one could they more fittingly be applied than to Leopold Zunz, a pioneer in the labyrinth of science, and the architect of many a stately palace adorning the path but lately discovered by himself. Surely, such an one deserves the cordial recognition and enduring gratitude of posterity.

¹ Address delivered at the installation of the Leopold Zunz Lodge at Berlin.

Despite the fact that Zunz was born at Detmold (August 10, 1794), he was an integral part of old Berlin—a Berlin citizen, not by birth, but by vocation, so to speak. His being was intertwined with its life by a thousand tendrils of intellectual sympathy. The city, in turn, or, to be topographically precise, the district between *Mauerstrasse* and *Rosenstrasse* knew and loved him as one of its public characters. Time was when his witticisms leapt from mouth to mouth in the circuit between the Varnhagen *salon* and the synagogue in the *Heidereturergasse*, everywhere finding appreciative listeners. An observer stationed *Unter den Linden* daily for more than thirty years might have seen a peculiar couple stride briskly towards the *Thiergarten* in the early afternoon. The loungers at Spargnapani's *café* regularly interrupted their endless newspaper reading to crane their necks and say to one another, "There go Dr. Zunz and his wife."

In his obituary notice of the poet Mosenthal, Franz Dingelstedt roguishly says: "He was of poor, albeit Jewish parentage." The same applies to Zunz, only the saying would be truer, if not so witty, in this form: "He was of Jewish, hence of poor, parentage." Among German Jews throughout the middle ages and up to the first half of this century, poverty was the rule, a comfortable competency a rare exception, wealth an unheard of condition. But Jewish poverty was relieved of sordidness by a precious gift of the old rabbis, who said: "Have a tender care of the children of the poor;

from them goeth forth the Law"; an admonition and a prediction destined to be illustrated in the case of Zunz. Very early he lost his mother, and the year 1805 finds him bereft of both parents, under the shelter and in the loving care of an institution founded by a pious Jew in Wolfenbüttel. Here he was taught the best within the reach of German Jews of the day, the *alpha* and *omega* of whose knowledge and teaching were comprised in the Talmud. The Wolfenbüttel school may be called progressive, inasmuch as a teacher, watchmaker by trade and novel-writer by vocation, was engaged to give instruction four times a week in the three R's. We may be sure that those four lessons were not given with unvarying regularity.

In his scholastic home, Leopold Zunz met Isaac Marcus Jost, a waif like himself, later the first Jewish historian, to whom we owe interesting details of Zunz's early life. In his memoirs¹ he tells the following: "Zunz had been entered as a pupil before I arrived. Even in those early days there were evidences of the acumen of the future critic. He was dominated by the spirit of contradiction. On the sly we studied grammar, his cleverness helping me over many a stumbling-block. He was very witty, and wrote a lengthy Hebrew satire on our tyrants, from which we derived not a little amusement as each part was finished. Unfortunately, the misdemeanor was detected, and the *corpus delicti* consigned to the flames, but the sobriquet *chotsuf* (impudent fellow) clung to the writer."

¹ In *Sippurim*, I, 165 ff.

It is only just to admit that in this *Beth ha-Midrash* Zunz laid the foundation of the profound, comprehensive scholarship on Talmudic subjects, the groundwork of his future achievements as a critic. The circumstance that both these embryo historians had to draw their first information about history from the Jewish German paraphrase of "Yosippon," an historical compilation, is counterbalanced by careful instruction in Rabbinical literature, whose labyrinthine ways soon became paths of light to them.

A new day broke, and in its sunlight the condition of affairs changed. In 1808 the *Beth ha-Midrash* was suddenly transformed into the "Samson-school," still in useful operation. It became a primary school, conducted on approved pedagogic principles, and Zunz and Jost were among the first registered under the new, as they had been under the old, administration. Though the one was thirteen, and the other fourteen years old, they had to begin with the very rudiments of reading and writing. Campe's juvenile books were the first they read. A year later finds them engaged in secretly studying Greek, Latin, and mathematics during the long winter evenings, by the light of bits of candles made by themselves of drippings from the great wax tapers in the synagogue. After another six months, Zunz was admitted to the first class of the Wolfenbüttel, and Jost to that of the Brunswick, *gymnasium*. It characterizes the men to say that Zunz was the first, and Jost the third, Jew in Germany to

enter a *gymnasium*. Now progress was rapid. The classes of the *gymnasium* were passed through with astounding ease, and in 1811, with a minimum of luggage, but a very considerable mental equipment, Zunz arrived in Berlin, never to leave it except for short periods. He entered upon a course in philology at the newly founded university, and after three years of study, he was in the unenviable position to be able to tell himself that he had attained to—nothing.

For, to what could a cultured Jew attain in those days, unless he became a lawyer or a physician? The Hardenberg edict had opened academical careers to Jews, but when Zunz finished his studies, that provision was completely forgotten. So he became a preacher. A rich Jew, Jacob Herz Beer, the father of two highly gifted sons, Giacomo and Michael Beer, had established a private synagogue in his house, and here officiated Edward Kley, C. Günsburg, J. L. Auerbach, and, from 1820 to 1822, Leopold Zunz. It is not known why he resigned his position, but to infer that he had been forced to embrace the vocation of a preacher by the stress of circumstances is unjust. At that juncture he probably would have chosen it, if he had been offered the rectorship of the Berlin university; for, he was animated by somewhat of the spirit that urged the prophets of old to proclaim and fulfil their mission in the midst of storms and in despite of threatening dangers.

Zunz's sermons delivered from 1820 to 1822 in

the first German reform temple are truly instinct with the prophetic spirit. The breath of a mighty enthusiasm rises from the yellowed pages. Every word testifies that they were indited by a writer of puissant individuality, disengaged from the shackles of conventional homiletics, and boldly striking out on untrodden paths. In the Jewish Berlin of the day, a rationalistic, half-cultured generation, swaying irresolutely between Mendelssohn and Schleiermacher, these new notes awoke sympathetic echoes. But scarcely had the music of his voice become familiar, when it was hushed. In 1823, a royal cabinet order prohibited the holding of the Jewish service in German, as well as every other innovation in the ritual, and so German sermons ceased in the synagogue. Zunz, who had spoken like Moses, now held his peace like Aaron, in modesty and humility, yielding to the inevitable without rancor or repining, always loyal to the exalted ideal which inspired him under the most depressing circumstances. He dedicated his sermons, delivered at a time of religious enthusiasm, to "youth at the crossroads," whom he had in mind throughout, in the hope that they might "be found worthy to lead back to the Lord hearts, which, through deception or by reason of stubbornness, have fallen away from Him."

The rescue of the young was his ideal. At the very beginning of his career he recognized that the old were beyond redemption, and that, if response and confidence were to be won from the young, the expounding of the new Judaism was work, not for

the pulpit, but for the professor's chair. "Devotional exercises and balmy lotions for the soul" could not heal their wounds. It was imperative to bring their latent strength into play. Knowing this to be his pedagogic principle, we shall not go far wrong, if we suppose that in the organization of the "Society for Jewish Culture and Science" the initial step was taken by Leopold Zunz. In 1819 when the mobs of Würzburg, Hamburg, and Frankfort-on-the-Main revived the "Hep, hep!" cry, three young men, Edward Gans, Moses Moser, and Leopold Zunz conceived the idea of a society with the purpose of bringing Jews into harmony with their age and environment, not by forcing upon them views of alien growth, but by a rational training of their inherited faculties. Whatever might serve to promote intelligence and culture was to be nurtured: schools, seminaries, academies, were to be erected, literary aspirations fostered, and all public-spirited enterprises aided; on the other hand, the rising generation was to be induced to devote itself to arts, trades, agriculture, and the applied sciences; finally, the strong inclination to commerce on the part of Jews was to be curbed, and the tone and conditions of Jewish society radically changed—lofty goals for the attainment of which most limited means were at the disposal of the projectors. The first fruits of the society were the "Scientific Institute," and the "Journal for the Science of Judaism," published in the spring of 1822, under the editorship of Zunz. Only three numbers appeared, and they

met with so small a sale that the cost of printing was not realized. Means were inadequate, the plans magnificent, the times above all not ripe for such ideals. The "Scientific Institute" crumbled away, too, and in 1823, the society was breathing its last. Zunz poured out the bitterness of his disappointment in a letter written in the summer of 1824 to his Hamburg friend Immanuel Wohlwill:

"I am so disheartened that I can nevermore believe in Jewish reform. A stone must be thrown at this phantasm to make it vanish. Good Jews are either Asiatics, or Christians (unconscious thereof), besides a small minority consisting of myself and a few others, the possibility of mentioning whom saves me from the imputation of conceit, though, truth to say, the bitterness of irony cares precious little for the forms of good society. Jews, and the Judaism which we wish to reconstruct, are a prey to disunion, and the booty of vandals, fools, money-changers, idiots, and *parnassim*.¹ Many a change of season will pass over this generation, and leave it unchanged: internally ruptured; rushing into the arms of Christianity, the religion of expediency; without stamina and without principle; one section thrust aside by Europe, and vegetating in filth with longing eyes directed towards the Messiah's ass or other member of the long-eared fraternity; the other occupied with fingering state securities and the pages of a cyclopædia, and constantly oscillating between wealth and bankruptcy, oppression and

¹ Administrators of the secular affairs of Jewish congregations. [Tr.]

tolerance. Their own science is dead among Jews, and the intellectual concerns of European nations do not appeal to them, because, faithless to themselves, they are strangers to abstract truth and slaves of self-interest. This abject wretchedness is stamped upon their penny-a-liners, their preachers, councillors, constitutions, *parnassim*, titles, meetings, institutions, subscriptions, their literature, their book-trade, their representatives, their happiness, and their misfortune. No heart, no feeling! All a medley of prayers, banknotes, and *rachmones*,¹ with a few strains of enlightenment and *chilluk!*²—

Now, my friend, after so revolting a sketch of Judaism, you will hardly ask why the society and the journal have vanished into thin air, and are missed as little as the temple, the school, and the rights of citizenship. The society might have survived despite its splitting up into sections. That was merely a mistake in management. The truth is that it never had existence. Five or six enthusiasts met together, and like Moses ventured to believe that their spirit would communicate itself to others. That was self-deception. *The only imperishable possession rescued from this deluge is the science of Judaism. It lives even though not a finger has been raised in its service since hundreds of years. I confess that, barring submission to the judgment of God, I find solace only in the cultivation of the science of Judaism.*

As for myself, those rough experiences of mine shall assuredly not persuade me into a course of

¹ Compassion, charity. [Tr.] ² Talmudical dialectics. [Tr.]

action inconsistent with my highest aspirations. I did what I held my duty. I ceased to preach, not in order to fall away from my own words, but because I realized that I was preaching in the wilderness. *Sapienti sat.* . . . After all that I have said, you will readily understand that I cannot favor an unduly ostentatious mode of dissolution. Such a course would be prompted by the vanity of the puffed-out frog in the fable, and affect the Jews . . . as little as all that has gone before. There is nothing for the members to do but to remain unshaken, and radiate their influence in their limited circles, leaving all else to God."

The man who wrote these words, it is hard to realize, had not yet passed his thirtieth year, but his aim in life was perfectly defined. He knew the path leading to his goal, and—most important circumstance—never deviated from it until he attained it. His activity throughout life shows no inconsistency with his plans. It is his strength of character, rarest of attributes in a time of universal defection from the Jewish standard, that calls for admiration, accorded by none so readily as by his companions in arms. Casting up his own spiritual accounts, Heinrich Heine in the latter part of his life wrote of his friend Zunz:¹ "In the instability of a transition period he was characterized by incorruptible constancy, remaining true, despite his acumen, his scepticism, and his scholarship, to self-imposed promises, to the exalted hobby of his soul. A man

¹ Cmp. Strodtmann: *H. Heine*, Vol. I., p. 316.

of thought and action, he created and worked when others hesitated, and sank discouraged," or, what Heine prudently omitted to say, deserted the flag, and stealthily slunk out of the life of the oppressed.

In Zunz, strength of character was associated with a mature, richly stored mind. He was a man of talent, of character, and of science, and this rare union of traits is his distinction. At a time when the majority of his co-religionists could not grasp the plain, elementary meaning of the phrase, "the science of Judaism," he made it the loadstar of his life.

Sad though it be, I fear that it is true that there are those of this generation who, after the lapse of years, are prompted to repeat the question put by Zunz's contemporaries, "What is the science of Judaism?" Zunz gave a comprehensive answer in a short essay, "On Rabbinical Literature," published by Mauer in 1818.¹ "When the shadows of barbarism were gradually lifting from the mist-shrouded earth, and light universally diffused could not fail to strike the Jews scattered everywhere, a remnant of old Hebrew learning attached itself to new, foreign elements of culture, and in the course of centuries enlightened minds elaborated the heterogeneous ingredients into the literature called rabbinical." To this rabbinical, or, to use the more fitting name proposed by himself, this neo-Hebraic, Jewish literature and science, Zunz devoted his love, his work, his life. Since centuries this field of

¹ Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I., p. 3ff.

knowledge had been a trackless, uncultivated waste. He who would pass across, had need to be a path-finder, robust and energetic, able to concentrate his mind upon a single aim, undisturbed by distracting influences. Such was Leopold Zunz, who sketched in bold, but admirably precise outlines the extent of Jewish science, marking the boundaries of its several departments, estimating its resources, and laying out the work and aims of the future. The words of the prophet must have appealed to him with peculiar force: "I remember unto thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, thy going after me in the wilderness, through a land that is not sown."

Again, when there was question of cultivating the desert soil, and seeking for life under the rubbish, Zunz was the first to present himself as a laborer. The only fruit of the Society for Jewish Culture and Science, during the three years of its existence, was the "Journal for the Science of Judaism," and its publication was due exclusively to Zunz's perseverance. Though only three numbers appeared, a positive addition to our literature was made through them in Zunz's biographical essay on Rashi, the old master expounder of the Bible and the Talmud. By its arrangement of material, by its criticism and grouping of facts, and not a little by its brilliant style, this essay became the model for all future work on kindred subjects. When the society dissolved, and Zunz was left to enjoy undesired leisure, he continued to work on the lines laid down therein.

Besides, Zunz was a political journalist, for many years political editor of "Spener's Journal," and a contributor to the *Gesellschafter*, the *Iris*, *Die Freimüttigen*, and other publications of a literary character. From 1825 to 1829, he was a director of the newly founded Jewish congregational school; for one year he occupied the position of preacher at Prague; and from 1839 to 1849, the year of its final closing, he acted as trustee of the Jewish teachers' seminary in Berlin. Thereafter he had no official position.

As a politician he was a pronounced democrat. Reading his political addresses to-day, after a lapse of half a century, we find in them the clearness and sagacity that distinguish the scientific productions of the investigator. Here is an extract from his words of consolation addressed to the families of the heroes of the March revolution of 1848:¹

"They who walked our streets unnoticed, who meditated in their quiet studies, toiled in their workshops, cast up accounts in offices, sold wares in the shops, were suddenly transformed into valiant fighters, and we discovered them at the moment when like meteors they vanished. When they grew lustrous, they disappeared from our sight, and when they became our deliverers, we lost the opportunity of thanking them. Death has made them great and precious to us. Departing they poured unmeasured wealth upon us all, who were so poor. Our heads, parched like a summer sky, produced no fruitful

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

rain of magnanimous thoughts. The hearts in our bosoms, turned into stone, were bereft of human sympathies. Vanity and illusions were our idols; lies and deception poisoned our lives; lust and avarice dictated our actions; a hell of immorality and misery, corroding every institution, heated the atmosphere to suffocation, until black clouds gathered, a storm of the nations raged about us, and purifying streaks of lightning darted down upon the barricades and into the streets. Through the storm-wind, I saw chariots of fire and horses of fire bearing to heaven the men of God who fell fighting for right and liberty. I hear the voice of God, O ye that weep, knighting your dear ones. The freedom of the press is their patent of nobility, our hearts, their monuments. Every one of us, every German, is a mourner, and you, survivors, are no longer abandoned."

In an election address of February 1849,¹ Zunz says: "The first step towards liberty is to miss liberty, the second, to seek it, the third, to find it. Of course, many years may pass between the seeking and the finding." And further on: "As an elector, I should give my vote for representatives only to men of principle and immaculate reputation, who neither hesitate nor yield; who cannot be made to say cold is warm, and warm is cold; who disdain legal subtleties, diplomatic intrigues, lies of whatever kind, even when they redound to the advantage of the party. Such are worthy of the confi-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

dence of the people, because conscience is their monitor. They may err, for to err is human, but they will never deceive."

Twelve years later, on a similar occasion, he uttered the following prophetic words:¹ "A genuinely free form of government makes a people free and upright, and its representatives are bound to be champions of liberty and progress. If Prussia, unfurling the banner of liberty and progress, will undertake to provide us with such a constitution, our self-confidence, energy, and trustfulness will return. Progress will be the fundamental principle of our lives, and out of our united efforts to advance it will grow a firm, indissoluble union. Now, then, Germans! Be resolved, all of you, to attain the same goal, and your will shall be a storm-wind scattering like chaff whatever is old and rotten. In your struggle for a free country, you will have as allies the army of mighty minds that have suffered for right and liberty in the past. Now you are split up into tribes and clans, held together only by the bond of language and a classic literature. You will grow into a great nation, if but all brother-tribes will join us. Then Germany, strongly secure in the heart of Europe, will be able to put an end to the quailing before attacks from the East or the West, and cry a halt to war. The empire, some one has said, means peace. Verily, with Prussia at its head, the German empire means peace."

Such utterances are characteristic of Zunz, the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

politician. His best energies and efforts, however, were devoted to his researches. Science, he believed, would bring about amelioration of political conditions; science, he hoped, would preserve Judaism from the storms and calamities of his generation, for the fulfilment of its historical mission. Possessed by this idea, he wrote *Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden* ("Jewish Homiletics," 1832), the basis of the future science of Judaism, the first clearing in the primeval forest of rabbinical writings, through which the pioneer led his followers with steady step and hand, as though walking on well trodden ground. Heinrich Heine, who appreciated Zunz at his full worth, justly reckoned this book "among the noteworthy productions of the higher criticism," and another reviewer with equal justice ranks it on a level with the great works of Böckh, Diez, Grimm, and others of that period, the golden age of philological research in Germany.

Like almost all that Zunz wrote, *Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden* was the result of a polemic need. By nature Zunz was a controversialist. Like a sentinel upon the battlements, he kept a sharp lookout upon the land. Let the Jews be threatened with injustice by ruler, statesman, or scholar, and straightway he attacked the enemy with the weapons of satire and science. One can fancy that the cabinet order prohibiting German sermons in the synagogue, and so stifling the ambition of his youth, awakened the resolve to trace the development of the sermon among Jews, and show that thousands

of years ago the wellspring of religious instruction bubbled up in Judah's halls of prayer, and has never since failed, its wealth of waters overflowing into the popular Midrash, the repository of little known, unappreciated treasures of knowledge and experience, accumulated in the course of many centuries.

In the preface to this book, Zunz, the democrat, says that for his brethren in faith he demands of the European powers, "not rights and liberties, but right and liberty. Deep shame should mantle the cheek of him who, by means of a patent of nobility conferred by favoritism, is willing to rise above his *co-religionists*, while the law of the land brands him by assigning him a place among the lowest of his *co-citizens*. Only in the rights common to all citizens can we find satisfaction; only in unquestioned equality, the end of our pain. Liberty unshackling the hand to fetter the tongue; tolerance delighting not in our progress, but in our decay; citizenship promising protection without honor, imposing burdens without holding out prospects of advancement; they all, in my opinion, are lacking in love and justice, and such baneful elements in the body politic must needs engender pestiferous diseases, affecting the whole and its every part."

Zunz sees a connection between the civil disabilities of the Jews and their neglect of Jewish science and literature. Untrammelled, instructive speech he accounts the surest weapon. Hence the homilies of the Jews appear to him to be worthy, and to stand

in need, of historical investigation, and the results of his research into their origin, development, and uses, from the time of Ezra to the present day, are laid down in this epoch-making work.

The law forbidding the bearing of German names by Jews provoked Zunz's famous and influential little book, "The Names of the Jews," like most of his later writings polemic in origin, in which respect they remind one of Lessing's works.

In the ardor of youth Zunz had borne the banner of reform; in middle age he became convinced that the young generation of iconoclasts had rushed far beyond the ideal goal of the reform movement cherished in his visions. As he had upheld the age and sacred uses of the German sermon against the assaults of the orthodox; so for the benefit and instruction of radical reformers, he expounded the value and importance of the Hebrew liturgy in profound works, which appeared during a period of ten years, crystallizing the results of a half-century's severe application. They rounded off the symmetry of his spiritual activity. For, when Midrashic inspiration ceased to flow, the *piut*—synagogue poetry—established itself, and the transformation from the one into the other was the active principle of neo-Hebraic literature for more than a thousand years. Zunz's vivifying sympathies knit the old and the new into a wondrously firm historical thread. Nowhere have the harmony and continuity of Jewish literary development found such adequate expression as in his *Synagogale Poesie des Mittelal-*

ters ("Synagogue Poetry of the Middle Ages," 1855), *Ritus des synagogalen Gottesdienstes* ("The Ritual of the Synagogue," 1859), and *Litteraturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* ("History of Synagogue Poetry," 1864), the capstone of his literary endeavors.

In his opinion, the only safeguard against error lies in the pursuit of science, not, indeed, dryasdust science, but science in close touch with the exuberance of life regulated by high-minded principles, and transfigured by ideal hopes. Sermons and prayers in harmonious relation, he believed,¹ will "enable some future generation to enjoy the fruits of a progressive, rational policy, and it is meet that science and poetry should be permeated with ideas serving the furtherance of such policy. Education is charged with the task of moulding enlightened minds to think the thoughts that prepare for right-doing, and warm, enthusiastic hearts to execute commendable deeds. For, after all is said and done, the well-being of the community can only grow out of the intelligence and the moral life of each member. Every individual that strives to apprehend the harmony of human and divine elements attains to membership in the divine covenant. The divine is the aim of all our thoughts, actions, sentiments, and hopes. It invests our lives with dignity, and supplies a moral basis for our relations to one another. Well, then, let us hope for redemption—for the universal recognition of a form of government under

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

which the rights of man are respected. Then free citizens will welcome Jews as brethren, and Israel's prayers will be offered up by mankind."

These are samples of the thoughts underlying Zunz's great works, as well as his numerous smaller, though not less important, productions: biographical and critical essays, legal opinions, sketches in the history of literature, reviews, scientific inquiries, polemical and literary fragments, collected in his work *Zur Geschichte und Litteratur* ("Contributions to History and Literature," 1873), and in three volumes of collected writings. Since the publication of his "History of Synagogue Poetry," Zunz wrote only on rare occasions. His last work but one was *Deutsche Briefe* (1872) on German language and German intellect, and his last, an incisive and liberal contribution to Bible criticism (*Studie zur Bibelkritik*, 1874), published in the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* in Leipzig. From that time on, when the death of his beloved wife, Adelheid Zunz, a most faithful helpmate, friend, counsellor, and support, occurred, he was silent.

Zunz had passed his seventieth year when his "History of Synagogue Poetry" appeared. He could permit himself to indulge in well-earned rest, and from the vantage-ground of age inspect the bustling activity of a new generation of friends and disciples on the once neglected field of Jewish science.

Often as the cause of religion and civil liberty

received a check at one place or another, during those long years when he stood aside from the turmoil of life, a mere looker-on, he did not despair; he continued to hope undaunted. Under his picture he wrote sententiously: "Thought is strong enough to vanquish arrogance and injustice without recourse to arrogance and injustice."

Zunz's life and work are of incalculable importance to the present age and to future generations. With eagle vision he surveyed the whole domain of Jewish learning, and traced the lines of its development. Constructive as well as critical, he raised widely scattered fragments to the rank of a literature which may well claim a place beside the literatures of the nations. Endowed with rare strength of character, he remained unflinchingly loyal to his ancestral faith, "the exalted hobby of his soul"—a model for three generations. Jewish literature owes to him a scientific style. He wrote epigrammatic, incisive, perspicuous German, stimulating and suggestive, such as Lessing used. The reform movement he supported as a legitimate development of Judaism on historical lines. On the other hand, he fostered loyalty to Judaism by lucidly presenting to young Israel the value of his faith, his intellectual heritage, and his treasures of poetry. Zunz, then, is the originator of a momentous phase in our development, producing among its adherents as among outsiders a complete revolution in the appreciation of Judaism, its religious and intellectual aspects. Together with self-knowledge he taught

his brethren self-respect. He was, in short, a clear thinker and acute critic; a German, deeply attached to his beloved country, and fully convinced of the supremacy of German mind; at the same time, an ardent believer in Judaism, imbued with some of the spirit of the prophets, somewhat of the strength of Jewish heroes and martyrs, who sacrificed life for their conviction, and with dying lips made the ancient confession: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one!"

His name is an abiding possession for our nation; it will not perish from our memory. "Good night, my prince! O that angel choirs might lull thy slumbers!"

HEINRICH HEINE AND JUDAISM

I

No modern poet has aroused so much discussion as Heinrich Heine. His works are known everywhere, and quotations from them—gorgeous butterflies, stinging gnats, buzzing bees—whizz and whirr through the air of our century. They are the *vade mecum* of modern life in all its moods and variations.

This high regard is a recent development. Within the last thirty years a complete change has taken place in public opinion. Soon after the poet's death, he was entirely neglected. The *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, whose columns had for decades been enriched with his contributions, took three months to get up a little obituary notice. Then followed a period of acrimonious detraction; at last, cordial appreciation has come.

The conviction has been growing that in Heine the German nation must revere its greatest lyric poet since Goethe, and as time removes him from us, the baser elements of his character recede into the background, his personality is lost sight of, and his poetry becomes the paramount consideration.

What is the attitude of Judaism? Does it ac-

knowledge Heine as its son? Is it disposed to accept *cum beneficio inventarii* the inheritance he has bequeathed to it? To answer these questions we must review Heine's life, his relations to Judaism, his opinions on Jewish subjects, and the qualities which prove him heir to the peculiarities of the Jewish race.

Heine's family was Jewish. On the paternal side it can be traced to Meyer Samson Popert and Fromet Heckscher of Altona; on the maternal side further back, to Isaac van Geldern, who emigrated in about 1700 from Holland to the duchy of Jülich-Berg. He and his son Lazarus van Geldern were people of importance at Düsseldorf, and his other sons, Simon and Gottschalk, were known and respected beyond the confines of their city. Simon van Geldern was the author of "The Israelites on Mount Horeb," a didactic poem in English, and on his trip to the East he kept a Hebrew journal, which can still be seen. His younger brother Gottschalk was a distinguished physician, and occupied a position of high dignity in the Jewish congregations in the duchies of Jülich and Berg. It is said that he provided for the welfare of his brethren in faith "as a father provides for his children." His only daughter Betty (Peierche) van Geldern, urged by her family and in obedience to the promptings of her own heart, married Samson Heine, and became the mother of the poet. Heine himself has written much about his family,¹ particularly about his mother's

¹Cmp. *Memoiren* in his Collected Works, Vol. VI., p. 375 ff.

brother. Of his paternal grandfather, he knew only what his father had told him, that he was "a little Jew with a great beard." On the whole, his education was strictly religious, but it was tainted with the deplorable inconsistency so frequently found in Jewish homes. Themselves heedless of religious ceremonies, parents exact from their children punctilious observance of minute regulations. Samson Heine was one of the Jews often met with in the beginning of this century who, lacking true culture, caught up some of the encyclopædist phrases with which the atmosphere of the period was heavy. Heine describes his father's extraordinary buoyancy: "Always azure serenity and fanfares of good humor." The reproach is characteristic which he addressed to his son, when the latter was charged with atheism: "Dear son! Your mother is having you instructed in philosophy by Rector Schallmeier—that is her affair. As for me, I have no love for philosophy; it is nothing but superstition. I am a merchant, and need all my faculties for my business. You may philosophize as much as you please, only, I beg of you, don't tell any one what you think. It would harm my business, were people to discover that my son does not believe in God. Particularly the Jews would stop buying velvets from me, and they are honest folk, and pay promptly. And they are right in clinging to religion. Being your father, therefore older than you, I am more experienced, and you may take my word for it, atheism is a great sin."

Two instances related by Joseph Neunzig, one of his playmates, show how rigorously Harry was compelled to observe religious forms in his paternal home. On a Saturday the children were out walking, when suddenly a fire broke out. The fire extinguishers came clattering up to the burning house, but as the flames were spreading rapidly, all bystanders were ordered to range themselves in line with the firemen. Harry refused point-blank to help: "I may not do it, and I will not, because it is *Shabbes* to-day." But another time, when it jumped with his wishes, the eight year old boy managed to circumvent the Law. He was playing with some of his schoolmates in front of a neighbor's house. Two luscious bunches of grapes hung over the arbor almost down to the ground. The children noticed them, and with longing in their eyes passed on. Only Harry stood still before the grapes. Suddenly springing on the arbor, he bit one grape after another from the bunch. "Red-head Harry!" the children exclaimed horrified, "what are you doing?" "Nothing wrong," said the little rogue. "We are forbidden to pluck them with our hands, but the law does not say anything about biting and eating." His education was not equitable and not methodical. Extremely indulgent towards themselves, the parents were extremely severe in their treatment of their children. So arose the contradictions in the poet's character. He is one of those to whom childhood's religion is a bitter-sweet remembrance unto the end of days. Jewish sympathies

were his inalienable heritage, and from this point of view his life must be considered.

The poet's mother was of a different stamp from his father. Like most of the Jews in the Rhenish provinces, his father hailed Napoleon, the first legislator to establish equality between Jews and Christians, as a savior. His mother, on the other hand, was a good German patriot and a woman of culture, who exercised no inconsiderable influence upon the heart and mind of her son. Heine calls her a disciple of Rousseau, and his brother Maximilian tells us that Goethe was her favorite among authors.

The boy was first taught by Rintelsohn at a Jewish school, but his knowledge of Hebrew seems to have been very limited. It is an interesting fact that his first poem, "Belshazzar," which he tells us he wrote at the age of sixteen, was inspired by his childhood's faith and is based upon Jewish history. Towards the end of his life he said to a friend:¹ "Do you know what inspired me? A few words in the Hebrew hymn, *Wayhee bechatsi halaila*, sung, as you know, on the first two evenings of the Passover. This hymn commemorates all momentous events in the history of the Jews that occurred at midnight; among them the death of the Babylonian tyrant, snatched away at night for desecrating the holy Temple vessels. The quoted words are the refrain of the hymn, which forms part of the Haggada, the curious medley of legends and songs, recited by pious Jews at the *Seder*." Ay, the Passover cele-

¹ Ludwig Kalisch, *Pariser Skizzen*, p. 331.

bration, the *Seder*, remained in the poet's memory till the day of his death. He describes it still later in one of his finest works:¹ "Sweetly sad, joyous, earnest, sportive, and selfishly mysterious is that evening service, and the traditional chant with which the Haggada is recited by the head of the family, the listeners sometimes joining in as a chorus, is thrillingly tender, soothing as a mother's lullaby, yet impetuous and inspiring, so that Jews who long have drifted from the faith of their fathers, and have been pursuing the joys and dignities of the stranger, even they are stirred in their inmost parts when the old, familiar Passover sounds chance to fall upon their ears."

My esteemed friend Rabbi Dr. Frank of Cologne has in his possession a Haggada, admirably illustrated, an heirloom at one time of the Van Geldern family, and it is not improbable that it was out of this artistic book that Heinrich Heine asked the *Mah nishtannah*, the traditional question of the *Seder*.

Heine left home very young, and everybody knows that he was apprenticed to a merchant at Frankfort, and that his uncle Solomon's kindness enabled him to devote himself to jurisprudence. But this, of important bearing on our subject, is not a matter of common knowledge: *Always and everywhere, especially when he had least intercourse with Jews, Jewish elements appear most prominently in Heine's life.*

¹ Collected Works, Vol. IV., p. 227.

A merry, light-hearted student, he arrived in Berlin in 1821. A curious spectacle is presented by the Jewish Berlin of the day, dominated by the *salons*, and the women whose tact and scintillating wit made them the very centre of general society. The traditions of Rahel Levin, Henriette Herz, and other clever women, still held sway. But the state frustrated every attempt to introduce reforms into Judaism. Two great parties opposed each other more implacably than ever, the one clutching the old, the other yearning for the new. Out of the breach, salvation was in time to sprout. In the first quarter of our century, more than three-fourths of the Jewish population of Berlin embraced the ruling faith. This was the new, seditious element with which young Heine was thrown. His interesting personality attracted general notice. All circles welcomed him. The *salons* did their utmost to make him one of their votaries. Romantic student clubs at Lütter's and Wegener's wine-rooms left nothing untried to lure him to their nocturnal carousals. Even Hegel, the philosopher, evinced marked interest in him. To whose allurements does he yield? Like his great ancestor, he goes to "his brethren languishing in captivity." Some of his young friends, Edward Gans, Leopold Zunz, and Moses Moser, had formed a "Society for Jewish Culture and Science," with Berlin as its centre, and Heinrich Heine became one of its most active members. He taught poor Jewish boys from Posen several hours a week in the school established by the society, and all

questions that came up interested him. Joseph Lehmann took pleasure in repeatedly telling how seriously Heine applied himself to a review which he had undertaken to write on the compilation of a German prayer-book for Jewish women.

To the Berlin period belongs his *Almansor*, a dramatic poem which has suffered the most contradictory criticism. In my opinion, it has usually been misunderstood. *Almansor* is intelligible only if regarded from a Jewish point of view, and then it is seen to be the hymn of vengeance sung by Judaism oppressed. Substitute the names of a converted Berlin banker and his wife for "Aly" and "Suleima," Berlin under Frederick William III. for "Saragossa," the Berlin Thiergarten for the "Forest," and the satire stands revealed. The following passage is characteristic of the whole poem:¹

" Go not to Aly's castle ! Flee
That noxious house where new faith breeds,
With honeyed accents there thy heart
Is wrenched from out thy bosom's depths,
A snake bestowed on thee instead.
Hot drops of lead on thy poor head
Are poured, and nevermore thy brain
From madding pain shall rid itself.
Another name thou must assume,
That if thy angel warning calls,
And calls thee by thy olden name,
He call in vain."

Such were Heine's views at that time, and with them he went to Göttingen. There, though Jewish

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 13.

society was entirely lacking, and correspondence with his Berlin friends desultory, his Jewish interests grew stronger than ever. There, inspired by the genius of Jewish history, he composed his *Rabbi von Bacharach*, the work which, by his own confession, he nursed with unspeakable love, and which, he fondly hoped, would "become an immortal book, a perpetual lamp in the dome of God." Again Jewish conversions, a burning question of the day, were made prominent. Heine's solution is beyond a cavil enlightened. The words are truly remarkable with which Sarah, the beautiful Jewess, declines the services of the gallant knight:¹ "Noble sir! Would you be my knight, then you must meet nations in a combat in which small praise and less honor are to be won. And would you be rash enough to wear my colors, then you must sew yellow wheels upon your mantle, or bind a blue-striped scarf about your breast. For these are my colors, the colors of my house, named Israel, the unhappy house mocked at on the highways and the byways by the children of fortune."

Another illustration of Heine's views at that time of his life, and with those views he one day went to the neighboring town of Heiligenstadt—to be baptized.

Who can sound the depths of a poet's soul? Who can divine what Heine's thoughts, what his hopes were, when he took this step? His letters and confessions of that period must be read to gain an idea

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 257 *f.*

of his inner world. On one occasion he wrote to Moser, to whom he laid bare his most intimate thoughts:¹ "Mentioning Japan reminds me to recommend to you Golovnin's 'Journey to Japan.' Perhaps I may send you a poem to-day from the *Rabbi*, in the writing of which I unfortunately have been interrupted again. I beg that you speak to nobody about this poem, or about what I tell you of my private affairs. A young Spaniard, at heart a Jew, is beguiled to baptism by the arrogance bred of luxury. He sends the translation of an Arabic poem to young Yehuda Abarbanel, with whom he is corresponding. Perhaps he shrinks from directly confessing to his friend an action hardly to be called admirable. . . . Pray do not think about this."

And the poem? It is this:

TO EDOM

"Each with each has borne in patience
Longer than a thousand year—
Thou dost tolerate my breathing,
I thy ravings calmly hear.

Sometimes only, in the darkness,
Thou didst have sensations odd,
And thy paws, caressing, gentle,
Crimson turned with my rich blood.

Now our friendship firmer growtheth,
Daily keeps on growing straight.
I myself incline to madness,
Soon, in faith, *I'll* be thy mate."

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII., p. 390 *ff.*

A few weeks later he writes to Moser in a still more bitter strain: "I know not what to say. Cohen assures me that Gans is preaching Christianity, and trying to convert the children of Israel. If this is conviction, he is a fool; if hypocrisy, a knave. I shall not give up loving him, but I confess that I should have been better pleased to hear that Gans had been stealing silver spoons. That you, dear Moser, share Gans's opinions, I cannot believe, though Cohen assures me of it, and says that you told him so yourself. I should be sorry, if my own baptism were to strike you more favorably. I give you my word of honor—if our laws allowed stealing silver spoons, I should not have been baptized." Again he writes mournfully: "As, according to Solon, no man may be called happy, so none should be called honest, before his death. I am glad that David Friedländer and Bendavid are old, and will soon die. Then we shall be certain of them, and the reproach of having had not a single immaculate representative cannot be attached to our time. Pardon my ill humor. It is directed mainly against myself."

"Upon how true a basis the myth of the wandering Jew rests!" he says in another letter. "In the lonely wooded valley, the mother tells her children the grawsome tale. Terror-stricken the little ones cower close to the hearth. It is night . . . the postilion blows his horn . . . Jew traders are journeying to the fair at Leipsic. We, the heroes of the legend, are not aware of our part in it. The

white beard, whose tips time has rejuvenated, no barber can remove." In those days he wrote the following poem, published posthumously:¹

TO AN APOSTATE

"Out upon youth's holy flame !
 Oh ! how quickly it burns low !
Now, thy heated blood grown tame,
 Thou agreeest to love thy foe !

And thou meekly grovell'st low
 At the cross which thou didst spurn ;
Which not many weeks ago,
 Thou didst wish to crush and burn.

Fie ! that comes from books untold—
 There are Schlegel, Haller, Burke—
Yesterday a hero bold,
 Thou to-day dost scoundrel's work."

The usual explanation of Heine's formal adoption of Christianity is that he wished to obtain a government position in Prussia, and make himself independent of his rich uncle. As no other offers itself, we are forced to accept it as correct. He was fated to recognize speedily that he had gained nothing by baptism. A few weeks after settling in Hamburg he wrote: "I repent me of having been baptized. I cannot see that I have bettered my position. On the contrary, I have had nothing but disappointment and bad luck." Despite his baptism, his enemies called him "the Jew," and at heart he never did become a Christian.

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 196.

At Hamburg, in those days, Heine was repeatedly drawn into the conflict between reform and orthodoxy, between the Temple and the synagogue. His uncle Solomon Heine was a warm supporter of the Temple, but Heine, with characteristic inconsistency, admired the old rigorous rabbinical system more than the modern reform movement, which often called forth his ridicule. Yet, at bottom, his interest in the latter was strong, as it continued to be also in the Berlin educational society, and its "Journal for the Science of Judaism," of which, however, only three numbers were issued. He once wrote from Hamburg to his friend Moser: "Last Saturday I was at the Temple, and had the pleasure with my own ears to hear Dr. Salomon rail against baptized Jews, and insinuate that they are tempted to become faithless to the religion of their fathers only by the hope of preferment. I assure you, the sermon was good, and some day I intend to call upon the man. Cohen is doing the generous thing by me. I take my *Shabbes* dinner with him; he heaps fiery *Kugel* upon my head, and contritely I eat the sacred national dish, which has done more for the preservation of Judaism than all three numbers of the Journal. To be sure, it has had a better sale. If I had time, I would write a pretty little Jewish letter to Mrs. Zunz. I am getting to be a thoroughbred Christian; I am sponging on the rich Jews."

They who find nothing but jest in this letter, do not understand Heine. A bitter strain of disgust, of unsparing self-denunciation, runs through it—the

feelings that dictate the jests and accusations of his *Reisebilder*. This was the period of Heine's best creations: for as such his "Book of Songs," *Buch der Lieder*, and his *Reisebilder* must be considered. With a sudden bound he leapt into greatness and popularity.

The reader may ask me to point out in these works the features to be taken as the expression of the genius of the Jewish race. To understand our poet, we must keep in mind that *Heinrich Heine was a Jew born in the days of romanticism in a town on the Rhine*. His intellect and his sensuousness, of Jewish origin, were wedded with Rhenish fancy and blitheness, and over these qualities the pale moonshine of romanticism shed its glamour.

The most noteworthy characteristic of his writings, prose and verse, is his extraordinary subjectivity, pushing the poet's *ego* into the foreground. With light, graceful touch, he demonstrates the possibility of unrestrained self-expression in an artistic guise. The boldness and energy with which "he gave voice to his hidden self" were so novel, so surprising, that his melodies at once awoke an echo. This subjectivity is his Jewish birthright. It is Israel's ingrained combativeness, for more than a thousand years the genius of its literature, which throughout reveals a predilection for abrupt contrasts, and is studded with unmistakable expressions of strong individuality. By virtue of his subjectivity, which never permits him to surrender himself unconditionally, the Jew establishes a connection between

his *ego* and whatever subject he treats of. "He does not sink his own identity, and lose himself in the depths of the cosmos, nor roam hither and thither in the limitless space of the world of thought. He dives down to search for pearls at the bottom of the sea, or rises aloft to gain a bird's-eye view of the whole. The world encloses him as the works of a clock are held in a case. His *ego* is the hammer, and there is no sound unless, swinging rhythmically, itself touches the sides, now softly, now boldly." Not content to yield to an authority which would suppress his freedom of action, he traverses the world, and compels it to promote the development of his energetic nature. To these peculiarities of his race Heine fell heir—to the generous traits growing out of marked individuality, its grooves deepened by a thousand years of martyrdom, as well as to the petty faults following in the wake of excessive self-consciousness, which have furnished adversaries of the Jews with texts and weapons.

This subjectivity, traceable in his language and in his ancient literature, it is that unfits the Jew for objective, philosophic investigation. It is, moreover, responsible for that energetic self-assertiveness for which the Aramæan language has coined the word *chutspa*, only partially rendered by arrogance. Possibly it is the root of another quality which Heine owes to his Jewish extraction—his wit. Heine's scintillations are composed of a number of elements—of English humor, French sparkle, German irony, and Jewish wit, all of which, saving the

last, have been analyzed by the critics. Proneness to censure, to criticism, and discussion, is the concomitant of keen intellect given to scrutiny and analysis. From the buoyancy of the Jewish disposition, and out of the force of Jewish subjectivity, arose Jewish wit, whose first manifestations can be traced in the Talmud and the Midrash. Its appeals are directed to both fancy and heart. It delights in antithesis, and, as was said above, is intimately connected with Jewish subjectivity. Its distinguishing characteristic is the desire to have its superiority acknowledged without wounding the feelings of the sensitive, and an explanation of its peculiarity can be found in the sad fate of the Jews. The heroes of Shakespere's tragedies are full of irony. Frenzy at its maddest pitch breaks out into merry witticisms and scornful laughter. So it was with the Jews. The waves of oppression, forever dashing over them, strung their nerves to the point of reaction. The world was closed to them in hostility. There was nothing for them to do but laugh—laugh with forced merriment from behind prison bars, and out of the depths of their heartrending resignation. Complaints it was possible to suppress, but no one could forbid their laughter, ghastly though it was. M. G. Saphir, one of the best exponents of Jewish wit, justly said: "The Jews seized the weapon of wit, since they were interdicted the use of every other sort of weapon." Whatever humdrum life during the middle ages offered them, had to submit to the scalpel of their wit.

As a rule, Jewish wit springs from a lively appreciation of what is ingenious. A serious beginning suddenly and unexpectedly takes a merry, jocose turn, producing in Heine's elegiac passages the discordant endings so shocking to sensitive natures. But it is an injustice to the poet to attribute these rapid transitions to an artist's vain fancy. His satire is directed against the ideals of his generation, not against the ideal. Harsh, discordant notes do not express the poet's real disposition. They are exaggerated, romantic feeling, for which he himself, led by an instinctively pure conception of the good and the beautiful, which is opposed alike to sickly sentimentality and jarring dissonance, sought the outlet of irony.

Heine's humor, as I intimated above, springs from his recognition of the tragedy of life. It is an expression of the irreconcilable difference between the real and the ideal, of the perception that the world, despite its grandeur and its beauty, is a world of folly and contradictions; that whatever exists and is formed, bears within itself the germ of death and corruption; that the Lord of all creation himself is but the shuttlecock of irresistible, absolute force, compelling the unconditional surrender of subject and object.

Humor, then, grows out of the contemplation of the tragedy of life. But it does not stop there. If the world is so pitiful, so fragile, it is not worth a tear, not worth hatred, or contempt. The only sensible course is to accept it as it is, as a nothing,

an absolute contradiction, calling forth ridicule. At this point, a sense of tragedy is transformed into demoniac glee. No more is this a permanent state. The humorist is too impulsive to accept it as final. Moreover, he feels that with the world he has annihilated himself. In the phantom realm into which he has turned the world, his laughter reverberates with ghostlike hollowness. Recognizing that the world meant more to him than he was willing to admit, and that apart from it he has no being, he again yields to it, and embraces it with increased passion and ardor. But scarcely has the return been effected, scarcely has he begun to realize the beauties and perfections of the world, when sadness, suffering, pain, and torture, obtrude themselves, and the old overwhelming sense of life's tragedy takes possession of him. This train of thought, plainly discernible in Heine's poems, he also owes to his descent. A mind given to such speculations naturally seeks poetic solace in *Weltenschmerz*, which, as everybody knows, is still another heirloom of his race.

These are the most important characteristics, some admirable, some reprehensible, which Heine has derived from his race, and they are the very ones that raised opponents against him, one of the most interesting and prominent among them being the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. His two opinions on Heine, expressed at almost the same time, are typical of the antagonism aroused by the poet. In his book, "The World as Will and

Idea,"¹ he writes: "Heine is a true humorist in his *Romanzero*. Back of all his quips and gibes lies deep seriousness, *ashamed* to speak out frankly." At the same time he says in his journal, published posthumously: "Although a buffoon, Heine has genius, and the distinguishing mark of genius, ingenuousness. On close examination, however, his ingenuousness turns out to have its root in Jewish shamelessness; for he, too, belongs to the nation of which Riemer says that it knows neither shame nor grief."

The contradiction between the two judgments is too obvious to need explanation; it is an interesting illustration of the common experience that critics go astray when dealing with Heine.

II

When, as Heine puts it, "a great hand solicitously beckoned," he left his German fatherland in his prime, and went to Paris. In its sociable atmosphere, he felt more comfortable, more free, than in his own home, where the Jew, the author, the liberal, had encountered only prejudices. The removal to Paris was an inauspicious change for the poet, and that he remained there until his end was still less calculated to redound to his good fortune. He gave much to France, and Paris did little during

¹ Vol. II., p. 110. Cmp. Frauenstädt, *A. Schopenhauer*, p. 467 *ff.*

his life to pay off the debt. The charm exercised upon every stranger by Babylon on the Seine, wrought havoc in his character and his work, and gives us the sole criterion for the rest of his days. Yet, despite his devotion to Paris, home-sickness, yearning for Germany, was henceforth the dominant note of his works. At that time Heine considered Judaism "a long lost cause." Of the God of Judaism, the philosophical demonstrations of Hegel and his disciples had robbed him; his knowledge of doctrinal Judaism was a minimum; and his keen race-feeling, his historical instinct, was forced into the background by other sympathies and antipathies. He was at that time harping upon the long cherished idea that men can be divided into *Hellenists* and *Nazarenes*. Himself, for instance, he looked upon as a well-fed Hellenist, while Börne was a Nazarene, an ascetic. It is interesting, and bears upon our subject, that most of the verdicts, views, and witticisms which Heine fathers upon Börne in the famous imaginary conversation in the Frankfort *Judengasse*, might have been uttered by Heine himself. In fact, many of them are repeated, partly in the same or in similar words, in the jottings found after his death.

This conversation is represented as having taken place during the Feast of *Chanukka*. Heine who, as said above, took pleasure at that time in impersonating a Hellenist, gets Börne to explain to him that this feast was instituted to commemorate the victory of the valiant Maccabees over the king of

Syria. After expatiating on the heroism of the Maccabees, and the cowardice of modern Jews, Börne says:¹

"Baptism is the order of the day among the wealthy Jews. The evangel vainly announced to the poor of Judæa now flourishes among the rich. Its acceptance is self-deception, if not a lie, and as hypocritical Christianity contrasts sharply with the old Adam, who will crop out, these people lay themselves open to unsparing ridicule.—In the streets of Berlin I saw former daughters of Israel wear crosses about their necks longer than their noses, reaching to their very waists. They carried evangelical prayer books, and were discussing the magnificent sermon just heard at Trinity church. One asked the other where she had gone to communion, and all the while their breath smelt. Still more disgusting was the sight of dirty, bearded, malodorous Polish Jews, hailing from Polish sewers, saved for heaven by the Berlin Society for the Conversion of Jews, and in turn preaching Christianity in their slovenly jargon. Such Polish vermin should certainly be baptized with cologne instead of ordinary water."

This is to be taken as an expression of Heine's own feelings, which come out plainly, when, "persistently loyal to Jewish customs," he eats, "with good appetite, yes, with enthusiasm, with devotion, with conviction," *Shalef*, the famous Jewish dish, about which he says: "This dish is delicious, and it

¹ Collected Works, Vol. VII., p. 255 *ff.*

is a subject for painful regret that the Church, indebted to Judaism for so much that is good, has failed to introduce *Shalet*. This should be her object in the future. If ever she falls on evil times, if ever her most sacred symbols lose their virtue, then the Church will resort to *Shalet*, and the faithless peoples will crowd into her arms with renewed appetite. At all events the Jews will then join the Church from conviction, for it is clear that it is only *Shalet* that keeps them in the old covenant. Börne assures me that renegades who have accepted the new dispensation feel a sort of home-sickness for the synagogue when they but smell *Shalet*, so that *Shalet* may be called the Jewish *ranz des vaches*."

Heine forgot that in another place he had uttered this witticism in his own name. He long continued to take peculiar pleasure in his dogmatic division of humanity into two classes, the lean and the fat, or rather, the class that continually gets thinner, and the class which, beginning with modest dimensions, gradually attains to corpulency. Only too soon the poet was made to understand the radical falseness of his definition. A cold February morning of 1848 brought him a realizing sense of his fatal mistake. Sick and weary, the poet was taking his last walk on the boulevards, while the mob of the revolution surged in the streets of Paris. Half blind, half paralyzed, leaning heavily on his cane, he sought to extricate himself from the clamorous crowd, and finally found refuge in the Louvre, almost empty during the days of excitement. With difficulty he

dragged himself to the hall of the gods and goddesses of antiquity, and suddenly came face to face with the ideal of beauty, the smiling, witching Venus of Milo, whose charms have defied time and mutilation. Surprised, moved, almost terrified, he reeled to a chair, tears, hot and bitter, coursing down his cheeks. A smile was hovering on the beautiful lips of the goddess, parted as if by living breath; and at her feet a luckless victim was writhing. A single moment revealed a world of misery. Driven by a consciousness of his fate, Heine wrote in his "Confessions": "In May of last year I was forced to take to my bed, and since then I have not risen. I confess frankly that meanwhile a great change has taken place in me. I no longer am a fat Hellenist, the freest man since Goethe, a jolly, somewhat corpulent Hellenist, with a contemptuous smile for lean Jews—I am only a poor Jew, sick unto death, a picture of gaunt misery, an unhappy being."

This startling change was coincident with the first symptoms of his disease, and kept pace with it. The pent-up forces of faith pressed to his bedside; religious conversations, readings from the Bible, reminiscences of his youth, of his Jewish friends, filled his time almost entirely. Alfred Meissner has culled many interesting data from his conversations with the poet. For instance, on one occasion Heine breaks out with:¹

"Queer people this! Downtrodden for thousands of years, weeping always, suffering always,

¹ Alfred Meissner, *Heinrich Heine*, p. 138 *ff.*

abandoned always by its God, yet clinging to Him tenaciously, loyally, as no other under the sun. Oh, if martyrdom, patience, and faith in despite of trial, can confer a patent of nobility, then this people is noble beyond many another.—It would have been absurd and petty, if, as people accuse me, I had been ashamed of being a Jew. Yet it were equally ludicrous for me to call myself a Jew.—As I instinctively hold up to unending scorn whatever is evil, timeworn, absurd, false, and ludicrous, so my nature leads me to appreciate the sublime, to admire what is great, and to extol every living force.” Heine had spoken so much with deep earnestness. Jestingly he added: “Dear friend, if little Weill should visit us, you shall have another evidence of my reverence for hoary Mosaism. Weill formerly was precentor at the synagogue. He has a ringing tenor, and chants Judah’s desert songs according to the old traditions, ranging from the simple monotone to the exuberance of Old Testament cadences. My wife, who has not the slightest suspicion that I am a Jew, is not a little astonished by this peculiar musical wail, this trilling and cadencing. When Weill sang for the first time, Minka, the poodle, crawled into hiding under the sofa, and Cocotte, the polly, made an attempt to throttle himself between the bars of his cage. ‘M. Weill, M. Weill!’ Mathilde cried terror-stricken, ‘pray do not carry the joke too far.’ But Weill continued, and the dear girl turned to me, and asked imploringly: ‘Henri, pray tell me what sort of songs these are.’ ‘They are our Ger-

man folk songs,' said I, and I have obstinately stuck to that explanation."

Meissner reports an amusing conversation with Madame Mathilde about the friends of the family, whom the former by their peculiarities recognized as Jews. "What!" cried Mathilde, "Jews? They are Jews?" "Of course, Alexander Weill is a Jew, he told me so himself;—why he was going to be a rabbi." "But the rest, all the rest? For instance, there is Abeles, the name sounds so thoroughly German." "Rather say it sounds Greek," answered Meissner. "Yet I venture to insist that our friend Abeles has as little German as Greek blood in his veins." "Very well! But Jeiteles—Kalisch—Bamberg—Are they, too . . . O no, you are mistaken, not one is a Jew," cried Mathilde. "You will never make me believe that. Presently you will make out Cohn to be a Jew. But Cohn is related to Heine, and Heine is a Protestant." So Meissner found out that Heine had never told his wife anything about his descent. He gravely answered: "You are right. With regard to Cohn I was of course mistaken. Cohn is certainly not a Jew."

These are mere jests. In point of fact, his friends' reports on the religious attitude of the Heine of that period are of the utmost interest. He once said to Ludwig Kalisch, who had told him that the world was all agog over his conversion:¹ "I do not make a secret of my Jewish allegiance, to which I have not returned, because I never abjured it. I was not

¹ Ludwig Kalisch, *Pariser Skizzen*, p. 334.

baptized from aversion to Judaism, and my professions of atheism were never serious. My former friends, the Hegelians, have turned out scamps. Human misery is too great for men to do without faith."

The completest picture of the transformation, truer than any given in letters, reports, or reminiscences, is in his last two productions, the *Romanzero* and the "Confessions." There can be no more explicit description of the poet's conversion than is contained in these "confessions." During his sickness he sought a palliative for his pains—in the Bible. With a melancholy smile his mind reverted to the memories of his youth, to the heroism which is the underlying principle of Judaism. The Psalmist's consolations, the elevating principles laid down in the Pentateuch, exerted a powerful attraction upon him, and filled his soul with exalted thoughts, shaped into words in the "Confessions":¹ "Formerly I felt little affection for Moses, probably because the Hellenic spirit was dominant within me, and I could not pardon the Jewish lawgiver for his intolerance of images, and every sort of plastic representation. I failed to see that despite his hostile attitude to art, Moses was himself a great artist, gifted with the true artist's spirit. Only in him, as in his Egyptian neighbors, the artistic instinct was exercised solely upon the colossal and the indestructible. But unlike the Egyptians he did not shape his works of art out of brick or granite. His pyra-

¹ Collected Works, Vol. VII., 473 ff.

mids were built of men, his obelisks hewn out of human material. A feeble race of shepherds he transformed into a people bidding defiance to the centuries—a great, eternal, holy people, God's people, an exemplar to all other peoples, the prototype of mankind: he created Israel. With greater justice than the Roman poet could this artist, the son of Amram and Jochebed the midwife, boast of having erected a monument more enduring than brass.

As for the artist, so I lacked reverence for his work, the Jews, doubtless on account of my Greek predilections, antagonistic to Judaic asceticism. My love for Hellas has since declined. Now I understand that the Greeks were only beautiful youths, while the Jews have always been men, powerful, inflexible men, not only in early times, to-day, too, in spite of eighteen hundred years of persecution and misery. I have learnt to appreciate them, and were pride of birth not absurd in a champion of the revolution and its democratic principles, the writer of these leaflets would boast that his ancestors belonged to the noble house of Israel, that he is a descendant of those martyrs to whom the world owes God and morality, and who have fought and bled on every battlefield of thought."

In view of such avowals, Heine's return to Judaism is an indubitable fact, and when one of his friends anxiously inquired about his relation to God, he could well answer with a smile: *Dieu me pardonnera ; c'est son metier.* In those days Heine made his will, his true, genuine will, to have been the

first to publish which the present writer will always consider the distinction of his life. The introduction reads: "I die in the belief in one God, Creator of heaven and earth, whose mercy I supplicate in behalf of my immortal soul. I regret that in my writings I sometimes spoke of sacred things with levity, due not so much to my own inclination, as to the spirit of my age. If unwittingly I have offended against good usage and morality, which constitute the true essence of all monotheistic religions, may God and men forgive me."

With this confession on his lips Heine passed away, dying in the thick of the fight, his very bier haunted by the spirits of antagonism and contradiction. . . .

"Greek joy in life, belief in God of Jew,
And twining in and out like arabesques,
Ivy tendrils gently clasp the two."

In Heine's character, certainly, there were sharp contrasts. Now we behold him a Jew, now a Christian, now a Hellenist, now a romanticist; to-day laughing, to-morrow weeping, to-day the prophet of the modern era, to-morrow the champion of tradition. Who knows the man? Yet who that steps within the charmed circle of his life can resist the temptation to grapple with the enigma?

One of the best known of his poems is the plaint:

"Mass for me will not be chanted,
Kadosh not be said,
Naught be sung, and naught recited,
Round my dying bed."

The poet's prophecy has not come true. As this tribute has in spirit been laid upon his grave, so always thousands will devote kindly thought to him, recalling in gentleness how he struggled and suffered, wrestled and aspired; how, at the dawn of the new day, enthusiastically proclaimed by him, his spirit fled aloft to regions where doubts are set at rest, hopes fulfilled, and visions made reality.

THE MUSIC OF THE SYNAGOGUE¹

Ladies and Gentlemen:—Let the emotions aroused by the notes of the great masters, now dying away upon the air, continue to reverberate in your souls. More forcibly and more eloquently than my weak words, they express the thoughts and the feelings appropriate to this solemn occasion.

A festival like ours has rarely been celebrated in Israel. For nearly two thousand years the muse of Jewish melody was silent; during the whole of that period, a new chord was but seldom won from the unused lyre. The Talmud² has a quaint tale on the subject: Higros the Levite living at the time of the decadence of Israel's nationality, was the last skilled musician, and he refused to teach his art. When he sang his exquisite melodies, touching his mouth with his thumb, and striking the strings with his fingers, it is said that his priestly mates, transported by the magic power of his art, fell prostrate, and wept. Under the Oriental trappings of this tale is concealed regretful anguish over the decay of old Hebrew song. The altar at Jerusalem was demolished, and the songs of Zion, erst sung by the Levitical choirs under the leadership of the Korachides,

¹ Address at the celebration of Herr Lewandowski's fiftieth anniversary as director of music.

² *Yoma*, 38a.

were heard no longer. The silence was unbroken, until, in our day, a band of gifted men disengaged the old harps from the willows, and once more lured the ancient melodies from their quavering strings.

Towering head and shoulders above most of the group of restorers is he in whose honor we are assembled, to whom we bring greeting and congratulation. To you, then, Herr Lewandowski, I address myself to offer you the deep-felt gratitude and the cordial wishes of your friends, of the Berlin community, and, I may add, of the whole of Israel. You were appointed for large tasks—large tasks have you successfully performed. At a time when Judaism was at a low ebb, only scarcely discernible indications promising a brighter future, Providence sent you to occupy a guide's position in the most important, the largest, and the most intelligent Jewish community of Germany. For fifty years your zeal, your diligence, your faithfulness, your devotion, your affectionate reverence for our past, and your exalted gifts, have graced the office. Were testimony unto your gifts and character needed, it would be given by this day's celebration, proving, as it does, that your brethren have understood the underlying thought of your activities, have grasped their bearing upon Jewish development, and have appreciated their influence.

You have remodelled the divine service of the Jewish synagogue, superadding elements of devotion and sacredness. Under your touch old lays have clothed themselves with a modern garb—a new

rhythm vibrates through our historic melodies, keener strength in the familiar words, heightened dignity in the cherished songs. Two generations and all parts of the world have hearkened to your harmonies, responding to them with tears of joy or sorrow, with feelings stirred from the recesses of the heart. To your music have listened entranced the boy and the girl on the day of declaring their allegiance to the covenant of the fathers; the youth and the maiden in life's most solemn hour; men and women in all the sacred moments of the year, on days of mourning and of festivity.

A quarter of a century ago, when you celebrated the end of twenty-five years of useful work, a better man stood here, and spoke to you. Leopold Zunz on that occasion said to you: "Old thoughts have been transformed by you into modern emotions, and long stored words seasoned with your melodies have made delicious food."

This is your share in the revival of Jewish poesy, and what you have resuscitated, and remodelled, and re-created, will endure, echoing and re-echoing through all the lands. In you Higros the Levite has been restored to us. But your melodies will never sink into oblivious silence. They have been carried by an honorable body of disciples to distant lands, beyond the ocean, to communities in the remote countries of civilization. Thus they have become the perpetual inheritance of the congregation of Jacob, the people that has ever loved and wooed music, only direst distress succeeding in flinging the pall of silence over song and melody.

Holy Writ places the origin of music in the primitive days of man, tersely pointing out, at the same time, music's conciliatory charms: it is the descendant of Cain, the fratricide, a son of Lemech, the slayer of a man to his own wounding, who is said to be the "father of all such as play on the harp and guitar" (*Kinnor* and *Ugab*). Another of Lemech's sons was the first artificer in every article of copper and iron, the inventor of weapons of war, as the former was the inventor of stringed instruments. Both used brass, the one to sing, the other to fight. So music sprang from sorrow and combat. Song and roundelay, timbrels and harp, accompanied our forefathers on their wanderings, and preceded the armed men into battle. So, too, the returning victor was greeted, and in the Temple on Moriah's crest, joyful songs of gratitude extolled the grace of the Lord. From the harp issued the psalm dedicated to the glory of God—love of art gave rise to the psalter, a song-book for the nations, and its author David may be called the founder of the national and Temple music of the ancient Hebrews. With his song, he banished the evil spirit from Saul's soul; with his skill on the psaltery, he defeated his enemies, and he led the jubilant chorus in the Holy City singing to the honor and glory of the Most High.

Compare the Hebrew and the Hellenic music of ancient times: Orpheus with his music charms wild beasts; David's subdues demons. By means of Amphion's lyre, living walls raise themselves; Israel's cornets make level the ramparts of Jericho.

Arion's melodies lure dolphins from the sea; Hebrew music infuses into the prophet's disciples the spirit of the Lord. These are the wondrous effects of music in Israel and in Hellas, the foremost representatives of ancient civilization. Had the one united with the other, what celestial harmonies might have resulted! But later, in the time of Macedonian imperialism, when Alexandria and Jerusalem met, the one stood for enervated paganism, the other for a Judaism of compromise, and a union of such tones produces no harmonious chords.

But little is known of the ancient Hebrew music of the Temple, of the singers, the songs, the melodies, and the instruments. The Hebrews had songs and instrumental music on all festive, solemn occasions, particularly during the divine service. At their national celebrations, in their homes, at their diversions, even on their journeys and their pilgrimages to the sanctuary, their hymns were at once religious, patriotic, and social.¹ They had the viol and the cithara, flutes, cymbals, and castanets, and, if our authorities interpret correctly, an organ (*maphrepha*), whose volume of sound surpassed description. When, on the Day of Atonement, its strains pealed through the chambers of the Temple, they were heard in the whole of Jerusalem, and all the people bowed in humble adoration before the Lord of hosts. The old music ceased with the overthrow of the Jewish state. The Levites hung their

¹Cmp. Fétis, *Histoire générale de la Musique*, Vol. I., p. 563 ff.

harps on the willows of Babylon's streams, and every entreaty for the "words of song" was met by the reproachful inquiry: "How should we sing the song of the Lord on the soil of the stranger?" Higros the Levite was the last of Israelitish tone-artists.

Israel set out on his fateful wanderings, his unparalleled pilgrimage, through the lands and the centuries, along an endless, thorny path, drenched with blood, watered with tears, across nations and thrones, lonely, terrible, sublime with the stern sublimity of tragic scenes. They are not the sights and experiences to inspire joyous songs—melody is muffled by terror. Only lamentation finds voice, an endless, oppressive, anxious wail, sounding adown, through two thousand years, like a long-drawn sigh, reverberating in far-reaching echoes: "How long, O Lord, how long!" and "When shall a redeemer arise for this people?" These elegiac refrains Israel never wearies of repeating on all his journeyings. Occasionally a fitful gleam of sunlight glides into the crowded Jewish quarters, and at once a more joyous note is heard, rising triumphant above the doleful plaint, a note which asserts itself exultingly on the celebration in memory of the Maccabean heroes, on the days of *Purim*, at wedding banquets, at the love-feasts of the pious brotherhood. This fusion of melancholy and of rejoicing is the keynote of mediæval Jewish music growing out of the grotesque contrasts of Jewish history. Yet, despite its romantic woe, it is informed with the spirit of a remote past, making it the legitimate off-

spring of ancient Hebrew music, whose characteristics, to be sure, we arrive at only by guesswork. Of that mediæval music of ours, the poet's words are true: "It rejoices so pathetically, it laments so joyfully."

Whoever has heard, will never forget Israel's melodies, breaking forth into rejoicing, then cast down with sadness; flinging out their notes to the skies, then sinking into an abyss of grief; now elated, now oppressed; now holding out hope, now moaning forth sorrow and pain. They convey the whole of Judah's history—his glorious past, his mournful present, his exalted future promised by God. As their tones flood our soul, a succession of visions passes before our mental view: the Temple in all its unexampled splendor, the exultant chorus of Levites, the priests discharging their holy office, the venerable forms of the patriarchs, the lawgiver-guide of the people, prophets with uplifted finger of warning, worthy rabbis, pale-faced martyrs of the middle ages; but the melodies conjuring before our minds all these shadowy figures have but one burden: "How should we sing the song of the Lord on the soil of the stranger?"

That is the ever-recurring *motif* of the Jewish music of the middle ages. But the blending of widely different emotions is not favorable to the creation of melody. Secular occurrences set their seal upon religious music, of which some have so high a conception as to call it one of the seven liberal arts, or even to extol it beyond poetry. Jacob

Levi of Mayence (Maharil), living at the beginning of the fifteenth century, is considered the founder of German synagogue music, but his productions remained barren of poetic and devotional results. He drew his best subjects from alien sources. At the time of the Italian Renaissance, music had so firmly established itself in the appreciation of the people that a preacher, Judah Muscato, devoted the first of his celebrated sermons to music, assigning to it a high mission among the arts. He interpreted the legend of David's Æolian harp as a beautiful allegory. Basing his explanation on a verse in the Psalms, he showed that it symbolizes a spiritual experience of the royal bard. Another writer, Abraham ben David Portaleone, found the times still riper; he could venture to write a theory of music, as taught him by his teachers, Samuel Arkevolti and Menahem Lonsano, both of whom had strongly opposed the use of certain secular melodies then current in Italy, Germany, France, and Turkey for religious songs. Among Jewish musicians in the latter centuries of the middle ages, the most prominent was Solomon Rossi. He, too, failed to exercise influence on the shaping of Jewish music, which more and more delighted in grotesqueness and aberrations from good taste. The origin of synagogue melodies was attributed to remoter and remoter periods; the most soulful hymns were adapted to frivolous airs. Later still, at a time when German music had risen to its zenith, when Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven flourished, the Jewish strolling

musician *Klesmer*, a mendicant in the world of song as in the world of finance, was wandering through the provinces with his two mates.

Suddenly a new era dawned for Israel, too. The sun of humanity sent a few of its rays into the squalid Ghetto. Its walls fell before the trumpet blast of deliverance. On all sides sounded the cry for liberty. The brotherhood of man, embracing all, did not exclude storm-baptized Israel. The old synagogue had to keep pace with modern demands, and was arrayed in a new garb. Among those who designed and fashioned the new garment, he is prominent in whose honor we have met to-day.

From our short journey through the centuries of music, we have returned to him who has succeeded in the great work of restoring to its honorable place the music of the synagogue, sorely missed, ardently longed for, and bringing back to us old songs in a new guise. An old song and a new melody! The old song of abiding love, loyalty, and resignation to the will of God! His motto was the beautiful verse: "My strength and my song is the Lord"; and his unchanging refrain, the jubilant exclamation: "Blessed be thou, fair Musica!" A wise man once said: "Hold in high honor our Lady of Music!" The wise man was Martin Luther—another instance this of the conciliatory power of music, standing high above the barriers raised by religious differences. It is worthy of mention, on this occasion, that at the four hundredth anniversary celebration in honor of Martin Luther, in the Sebaldus

church at Nuremberg, the most Protestant of the cities of Germany, called by Luther himself "the eye of God," a psalm of David was sung to music composed by our guest of the day.

"Hold in high honor our Lady of Music!" We will be admonished by the behest, and give honor to the artist by whose fostering care the music of the synagogue enjoys a new lease of life; who, with pious zeal, has collected our dear old melodies, and has sung them to us with all the ardor and power with which God in His kindness endowed him.

"The sculptor must simulate life, of the poet I demand intelligence;
The soul can be expressed only by Polyhymnia!"

An orphan, song wandered hither and thither through the world, met, after many days, by the musician, who compassionately adopted it, and clothed it with his melodies. On the pinions of music, it now soars whithersoever it listeth, bringing joy and blessing wherever it alights. "The old song, the new melody!" Hark! through the silence of the night in this solemn moment, one of those old songs, clad by our *maestro* in a new melody, falls upon our ears: "I remember unto thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, thy going after me in the wilderness, through a land that is not sown!"

Hearken! Can we not distinguish in its notes, as they fill our ears, the presage of a music of the future, of love and good-will? We seem to hear the

rustle of the young leaves of a new spring, the resurrection foretold thousands of years agone by our poets and prophets. We see slowly dawning that great day on which mankind, awakened from the fitful sleep of error and delusion, will unite in the profession of the creed of brotherly love, and Israel's song will be mankind's song, myriads of voices in unison sending aloft to the skies the psalm of praise: Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

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